

“Jake” the Bombardier, “Hot Stuff” the B-24D, “Andy” The Great USAAF General

**By
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Every now and then you run across a little known historical happenstance with unusual connections that piques your interest. “Jake” a battle proven World War II bombardier and “Andy” an outstanding Army Air Force general didn’t know one another, but they shared something—“Hot Stuff” a mighty B-24D. Starting in October 1942 through 31 March 1943, Jake flew 31 combat missions in “Hot Stuff” over Europe and the Mediterranean (when the experts were saying that most crews would be shot down before they completed 25 missions). Then on 3 May 1943 “Andy” lost his life in “Hot Stuff” when he and part of her combat crew crashed into a mountain in Iceland trying to land in very bad weather. Only seven of “Hot Stuff’s” crew were on board the Iceland flight (Jake and copilot were bumped and the tail gunner was sick). Jake the unassuming bombardier later flew as the lead bombardier on another 14 combat missions against Japan in B-29’s. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal and many other medals for his combat and military service.

Jake was Robert T. Jacobson, who graduated from Carrol College in Waukesha, Wisconsin and entered the Army Air Force before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. When the war ended, he got out of the service and completed his master’s degree in hospital administration at Northwestern University in Chicago. He was then recalled to active duty and served in USAF hospitals in Japan, Turkey and the US, until he retired in 1968. Jake then became the assistant for administration in one of largest hospitals in Austin, Texas, until he retired a second time in 1983. He recently died, just two months before his 94th birthday.

“Andy” was Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews, a 1906 graduate of West Point and considered to be one of the **fastest** of the Army’s “fast burners.” In the 1930’s, the brilliant and articulate Andrews became the commander of all the Army Air Corps’ fighting forces and one of the leading voices when Army airmen were battling to get more B-17’s. But the Army’s General Staff wanted only small, short-ranged, less expensive and obsolete aircraft for close support. When Andrews was due for reassignment, the annoyed General Staff’s anti-air hierarchy gave him the “Billy” Mitchell treatment. They reduced him in rank from a major general to colonel and exiled him from the center of power to an obscure job in San Antonio, Texas. But when the evenhanded General George C. Marshall became the Army’s Chief of

Staff, he not only saw evidence of the Army General Staff's prejudicial management of the Army Air Corps, but also the unjust treatment of Andrews. Marshall knew the talented Andrews and quickly brought him back to Washington and promoted him to general. He then gave Andrews the first of a series of four key jobs—normally reserved for the most promising Army ground officers.

Andrews eventually took Dwight Eisenhower's job as the US European Theater Commander, when Eisenhower moved to North Africa. In his memoirs, General Henry "Hap" Arnold, who was probably as close to Marshall as anyone during WWII, said that he believed if Andrews hadn't been killed he would have been given command of the Allied invasion of Europe, instead of General Eisenhower. DeWitt S. Copp wrote an excellent article entitled *Frank M. Andrews: Marshall's Airman* that provides a great deal of circumstantial evidence that supports the view that Andrews would probably have been another of our WWII five star generals, if his life hadn't been cut short. But that's another story.

Like many of the unusually interesting stories, the story of "Hot Stuff," her crew and General Andrews faded from view and joined the ranks of the unknowns. Fortunately, the story was resurrected by Jim Lux, a retired IBM executive and USAF veteran. Jim is a fan of the USAF and history buff, with a keen interest in the Army Air Forces. He also is an active Commemorative Air Force member and a former CAF wing commander. When Jim first told me about Jake, he said, "I met Jake while playing golf at Lost Creek Country Club in Austin, Texas. He knew I was a member of the Commemorative Air Force and told me that he had been a bombardier in a B-24 Liberator in WWII. He also told me he had completed 31 missions in Europe and 14 more in B-29s in the Pacific. That was about all he said."

When Jake turned 92, his health began to fail and he wanted to look back at the most impressionable and traumatic part of his life. He made a simple request to his good friend Jim and asked him to search the internet for information about his WWII B-24 unit, the 93rd Bomb Group. Jim found a history of the 93rd on the internet and read that a B-24 named "Hot Stuff" was the first heavy bomber to complete 25 missions during WWII. The name "Hot Stuff" sounded familiar and Jim searched through some of the documents that Jake had given him. He found a picture of Jake and his crew, standing in front their B-24—painted on the nose of the bomber was its name, "Hot Stuff."

The following composite picture was provided by Jim Lux. Through research, Jim identified "Hot Stuff's" crewmembers, located the in flight shot of her that displays her tail number and for this article he added inserts of Jake and General Andrews.

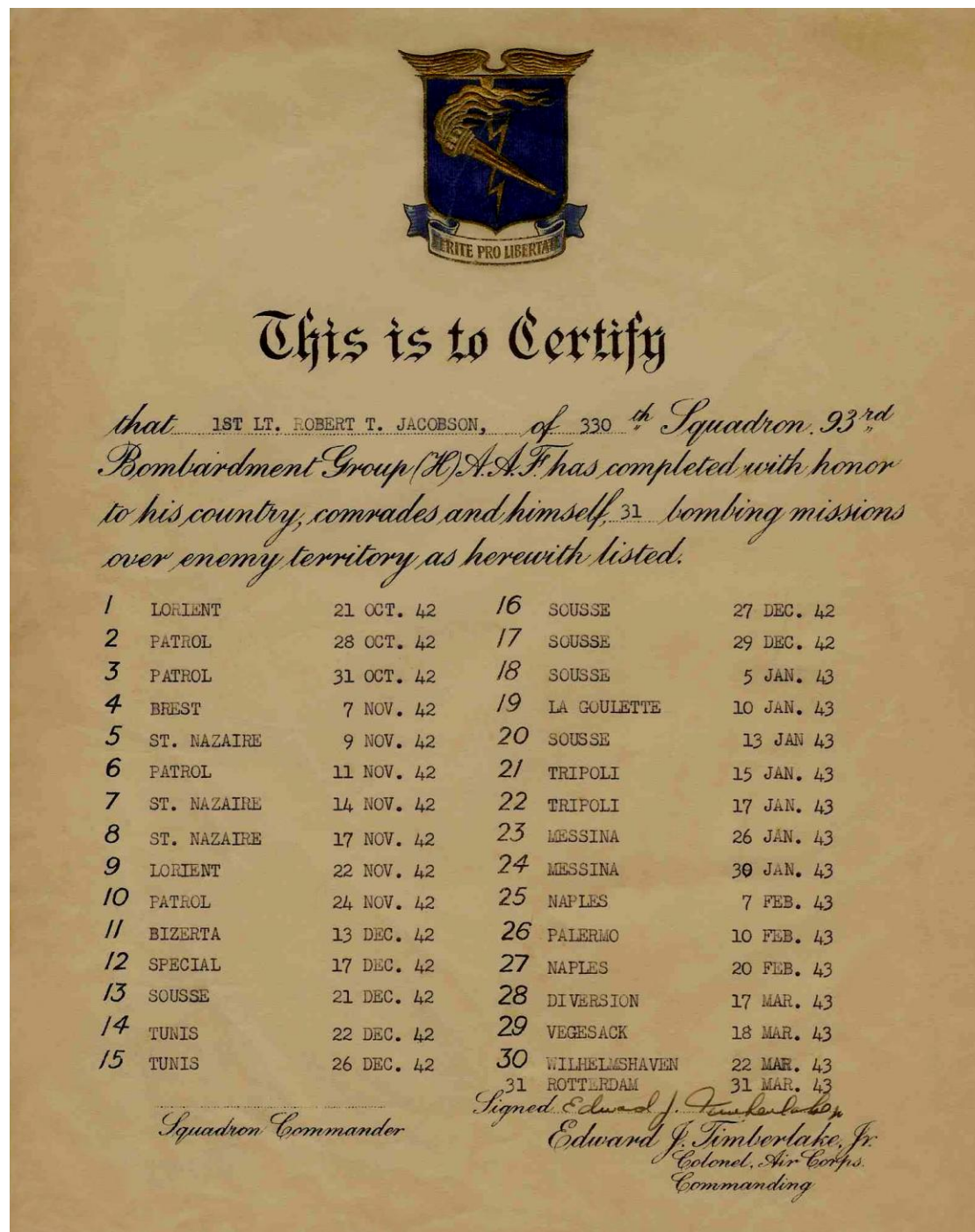


Jim said, "When I told Jake about what I had discovered he was surprised. Jake said they had flown their 25th combat mission on 7 February 1943 and then flew two more missions in the Mediterranean before returning to Britain. It wasn't until after they had flown their 31st combat mission on 31 March 1943 that they were told the crew would fly 'Hot Stuff' back to the States and tour the country to help sell War Bonds."

There are good reasons for this delayed recognition of "Hot Stuff" and her crew. After arriving in Britain in September 1942, the 93rd Bomb Group flew combat during October and part of November. With little warning, Jake's squadron (the 330th) was separated from the group and sent to the Mediterranean for ten days of temporary duty, to provide the newly formed 12th AF with more striking power—the ten days lasted more than three months.

The 330th arrived in North Africa a few weeks after the Allies had invaded and flew two combat missions before the squadron was uprooted again and reassigned to the 9th AF. While with the 9th AF, the squadron was first attached to the 98th Bomb Group, which had just arrived from the States. Then they were attached to a newly formed 376th Bomb Group, which was hurriedly being manned and equipped with an assortment of B-24's and crews that had been operating in Egypt.

The following is a copy of the certificate of the missions that Jake flew in Europe and the Mediterranean, which has been signed by Colonel Edward J. Timberlake, the 93rd Bomb Group commander:



Carroll (Cal) Stewart wrote a very detailed and well researched history of the 93rd Heavy Bomb Group. The group was nicknamed "Ted's Travelling Circus" after the group commander Edward J. (Ted) Timberlake, a 1931 West Point graduate, who went on to become a three star general. Cal Stewart had been a journalist before entering the service and joined the 93rd Bomb Group in Britain as a private. He started a weekly newspaper for the group, eventually won a commission and became Ted Timberlake's aide-de-camp. He was in a unique position

to observe all levels of the group's activities with the trained eyes and ears of a journalist. According to Stewart, General Andrews and Ted Timberlake were friends and in late April 1943, Andrews paid a visit to the group and made arrangements for his flight back to the States in "Hot Stuff" with its crew. Stewart said that General George C. Marshall had requested Andrews to return for consultations. Stewart also confirmed that only seven of "Hot Stuff's" crewmembers made the flight, because of the size of Andrews traveling party.

Jim Lux said Jake told him that after "Hot Stuff" and the seven crew members were lost, Jake got permission to deliver the personal effects of his two closest friends, Robert Shannon the pilot and James Gott the navigator, back to their families. Jake said even before he left Britain, the story of "Hot Stuff" and her crew had started to fade. The mad pace of aerial combat didn't allow much time for mourning—that took place back in the States by the families of the airmen who were killed. He said you see your friends in the morning and that night they're gone. The loss is so sudden. It can be like a game or a nightmare from which they should return. Jake was also saddened when Bob Shannon's recommendation for promotion to major was quickly cancelled. Although Jake said that he knew better, it seemed like someone was trying to make certain "Hot Stuff's" slate was wiped clean—so another B-24 and its crew could take its place.

Jim said that Jake's 93 year old eyes always filled with tears, whenever he spoke about the loss of his fellow crew members—even after more than 65 years. But he never once mentioned not being honored as a member of the first heavy bomber crew to have completed 25 combat missions, nor the unusual circumstances that had taken the honor away.

The story of General Andrews fared only slightly better. General George C. Marshall, the Army's great WWII Chief of Staff, considered Andrews to be one of his brightest stars and gave him key commands that ground officer would have fought to have. But Andrews' most notably memorial is Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, DC. Chances are that very few of thousands of daily visitors that pass through its gates have heard of Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews or know anything about him. The USAF has also named a few buildings and streets on air bases after him and an award has been named in his honor, but little more has been done. Some of the people who worked for Andrews and survived WWII are much better known—and some have been honored by promotions on the retired list. ***Promoting Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews to full general on the retired list might be a good place to start.***

Jim Lux is working hard to gain recognition for "Hot Stuff" and her crew. There's a natural tendency to limit the honor that should be given them, due to a lack of documentation by today's standards. However, the evaluators should keep in mind that the 330th Bomb Squadron, to which "Hot Stuff" and her crew were assigned, was uprooted and made a series of deployments, when the "overnight air force" was desperately trying to fulfill its combat requirements. The demands of the war at that time kept things in a constant state of flux,

command lines were blurred at every level and there was little time for administrative details. One can only imagine the turmoil that Jake's squadron of newly minted airmen experienced during this chaotic period. Anyone looking for a neat and detailed paper trail to prove or disprove something by today's standards will be disappointed. However in most cases, a unit's history, personal documents and interviews will normally provide enough information for an informed decision.

Brigadier General Richard M. Baughn entered the Army Air Force aviation cadet training program in January 1943 and received his pilot wings and commission as second lieutenant in April 1944 and retired from the US Air Force in July 1975. Baughn was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1923, graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and received a BS from the University of Maryland. His military schools include the USAF Air Tactical School, the Armed Forces Staff College and Great Britain's senior military school, The Imperial Defence College. He is a command pilot with more than 7,600 flying hours, including more than 5,000 in jet fighter aircraft. He has flown the P-40; P-51; P-47; F-80; RF-80; T-33; F-84B, F, and G; F-86E, F and H; F-100C,D and F; F-104A, C and D; F-105D and F; F-4C,D and E; A-6; F-111A and E; FB-111; KC-135; Meteor; Hawker Hunter, Lightning and 14 other types of military aircraft. He flew combat in P-51's with the 8th AF during WWII and in 1965-66 he flew three temporary F-105 combat tours, one at Tahkli and two at Korat, Thailand, before completing a full F-105 combat tour in 1966, as the commander of the 13th TFS. In addition to a full complement of F-105 fighters, the 13th TFS was also assigned all of Korat's F-100 and F-105 Wild Weasels and about half of Baughn's missions were flown with them. In June 1974 General Baughn was appointed deputy defense attaché, Defense Attaché Office, Saigon, Republic of Vietnam, his last assignment prior to his retirement. His decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Star Medal, 15 Air Medals and two Air Force Commendation Medals. His book "The Hellish Vortex: Between Breakfast and Dinner," a carefully researched historical novel about a WWII P-51 pilot in the 8th AF, won a 2008 Eric Hoffer Notable Award for fiction and a 2008 honorable mention award for fiction from The Writer's Digest. The Hellish Vortex is available at Amazon.com in both paperback and electronically in Kindle.